

Testimony of William V Begg III, MD, FACEP

President, Danbury Hospital Medical Staff

EMS Medical Director, Danbury Hospital

Trauma Liaison, Danbury Hospital

Clinical Practices Coordinator, Danbury Hospital Emergency Department

Board Certification: American Board of Emergency Medicine (1993, 2003)

Training: The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland (1989-1992)

March 29, 2012

H.B. No. 5360: An Act Prohibiting Certain Persons from Allowing Minors to Possess Alcoholic Liquor in Dwelling Units and on Private Property

To protect the health and safety of persons under the age of eighteen and to prohibit certain persons from allowing minors to possess alcoholic liquor in dwelling units or on private property.

I respectfully oppose amending H.B. No. 5360. The proposed amendments would limit the liability for underage drinking of persons, including parents, having control over any private property.

As an emergency room doctor for the last 23 years, I have encountered numerous examples of good kids making poor choices with alcohol, partly because of the environment they find themselves in. Having done "drunk driving" lectures at local high schools for 18 years, I have first hand knowledge of a subculture of parents that knowingly facilitate or stand idle while dozens of teens congregate to drink alcohol at their parent's home.

I do not accept the notion that if a parent goes to a different part of the house while the teenagers are in the basement, leaves the home before the drinking begins, or leaves and goes on vacation, he or she would not be responsible for the underage drinking that occurred in their dwelling

I have personally seen the consequences of allowing teenagers to drink alcohol at one's home, including teenagers maimed or killed in falls or car accidents, and teenage girls being raped. When I walk into a grieving room at 2am and tell tearful parents that your son is dead or your daughter was raped, they will many times ask, what could have been done?

I have three teenagers, and I am here today to say that by not absolving a parent from the responsibility and liability of allowing minors to drink alcohol on their property, the child you save may be yours or mine. I am passionate of the belief that if the parents of our communities knew there were strong legal implications to the choices they actively or passively made, they would be less willing to allow, and more proactive to prevent, teenagers from drinking alcohol on their property.

This amended language appears to be contrary to the very title of the bill, which states it is an act "prohibiting certain persons from allowing minors to possess alcohol on private property. I believe that the revisions proposed are contrary to the original intent of the social host law and as such is contrary to public policy. I would respectfully recommend rejection of the proposed changes.